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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 003896

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SUBJECT: STUDENTS RIOT IN ZHENGZHOU OVER BEATING OF
SCHOOLGIRL VENDOR

REF: FBIS CPP20070608715005

Classified By: Acting Political Internal Unit Chief Dan Krittenbrink.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) More than 1,000 students rioted in Zhengzhou, Henan Province on the evening of June 6 over the beating by city inspectors of a female vendor who was a student at a local university, according to international and Chinese media reports on June 8 (see Ref A). The situation spiraled out of control as throngs of students rushed to the scene to confront the inspectors, some of whom were allegedly drunk. Clashes later developed between students and the large numbers of police called to the scene, with students eventually dispersing late in the evening of June 6. The internet played a key role in disseminating information on the rampage, with eyewitnesses sharing first-hand accounts and photos with netizens in real time. According to Xinhua news reports, the Zhengzhou City Government announced on June 7 that it had responded to the incident by calling a late-night meeting to quickly investigate and deal with the matter, resulting in two inspectors being dismissed and six others detained by police.

¶2. (C) A local Embassy contact told Emboff that police never gained complete control of the crowd of angry students, many of whom were incensed by the way city inspectors "pick on" poor students who must hock wares (illegally) in order to pay their way through school. The number of rampaging students numbered "in the thousands," he said, and several police vehicles were "held hostage" by the crowd before eventually being released peacefully. Once students decided to disperse, they quickly left the scene, with no lingering fallout apparent afterward. Reinforcing this last point, two other contacts at a university located on the other side of Zhengzhou claimed on June 8 they had not even heard of the melee.

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